

The Streamer & Lure Manifesto

It is often said that to catch a big fish you need a big fly – that's not necessarily the case – but usual in the late trout season, in my experience the one fly fishing method which more often produces the bigger fish is streamer fishing. Streamers are large lures which are tied in various patterns – but they all imitate one thing, small fish. Not much can compare to the adrenaline rush when you see a large trout chasing your streamer!

Our Streamer & Lure Manifesto aims to introduce you to one of the most productive fly fishing styles to catch the bigger fish in the water. The key to streamer fishing, as any fly fishing method, is to know when and where to use it. Do not be put off using streamers, with the kit you will have all the equipment you need, you just need to change your approach – and maybe buy a few extra streamer patterns if the bug really bites you!

The larger trout in any water need lots of food to maintain their weight, this cannot be maintained by eating insects alone, so they turn their attention to the smaller fish which also inhabit the water. For successful streamer fishing, it helps to get started with a balanced setup, remember that the flies you will be using will be much larger than regular dry flies and nymphs used on rivers and stillwaters, this needs to be reflected in your choice of tackle:

- **Rods:**
 - **Action:** The first thing to consider when choosing a rod to use for streamers is to get the action right. To get the most out of streamer fishing you need to be able to impart movement into the fly – to do this you need to use a rod with a fairly fast action, so any movement in the rod tip is transmitted quickly down the line and tippet to the streamer.
 - **Length:** The length of rod you choose will depend upon the size of the river you are fishing; for large rivers go for a 10ft, on the smaller rivers and streams don't drop below 8ft. In essence, you need to use as long a rod as you can possibly get away with. The longer the rod, the longer casts you can employ, and you will have much more control over your line and leader.
 - **Weight:** The ideal weight for a streamer rod is 5 to 7 weight, however, river (and fish) size also comes into play here.
 - **On larger rivers,** with larger fish, you will need to use a 7 or 8 weight – to contend with the stronger currents and differing line options (see below).
 - **On smaller rivers & streams,** you can step down to a 4, 5 or 6 weight, this is more close-quarters fishing and line control is not as much of an issue. Handily, you can also use a 4-weight rod for both dry fly and nymphing techniques, so you only need take 1 rod to the water.
- **Reels:** This is one of the fly fishing methods which does require a reel with a strong and smooth drag. It also helps to use an interchangeable cassette style reel with a large arbor, as there may be times when you will need to use different density lines (see below).
- **Fly Lines:** Fly lines are the most important piece of the setup (except for the fly itself). The line is the defining factor on how the fly you are using will fish. Here's what I have learnt:

- **Floating Line:** The most versatile line in your armoury, floating lines can be fished upstream, downstream, and across. If you're fishing with a weighted streamer then a floating line is your best option. The only line which will allow you to mend and alter the line of attack without having to re-cast. If you are just starting your journey with Streamer fishing, then choose a floating line.
 - **Sink Tip Line:** A 'do-it-all' line for the majority of streamers you will use. A sink-tip line will allow your fly to fish deep on the slower/shallower rivers (less than 6ft deep). This is important as a full sinking line would be on the bottom before the fly was even halfway down. A sink-tip allows your fly and leader to sink at the same rate, making the retrieved fly return on a horizontal plane, just like a small fish swimming.
 - **Poly Leaders:** A Poly leader is essentially an extension to your fly line which can be attached (loop-to-loop) to convert a floating line into a sink-tip line. They are available in different lengths and sink rates, so you can match the tip to the water you are fishing.
 - **Full Sinking Line:** These are used in the larger, faster, and deeper rivers. When you need to cut through the water surface and get your fly line away from any of the surface currents which will induce slack in the system. Remember, the fly always follows along the same path as your fly line. If fishing in deeper water with a floating line, each pull will raise the fly in the water column, not what you want when you are trying to imitate a prey fish. It is important when choosing a sinking line, that you choose a streamer specific one, i.e. where the whole line sinks at the same rate (these are sometimes referred to as Density Compensated lines).
- **Leaders:** Opposite to dry fly fishing, the technology that the streamer angler uses is all in the fly line, not in the leader construction. Mono is the generally accepted material of choice, especially Maxima. To this end, the leader choice is simple. Generally, there are only three choices for leaders when streamer fishing:
 - **1-Section Level:** Use a single piece of level leader when fishing full sinking lines and flies which are 6" or longer. These larger flies generally have enough inherent weight to turn over a shorter level leader.
 - **2 Sections:** The most widely used leader for streamer fishing. 2-Section leaders are used with medium sized flies (3" to 5") and on all floating, sinking and sink-tip lines.
 - **3 Sections:** Only used when fishing streamers which are shorter than 2" (micro streamers).
 - **Leader Length:** Shorter leaders on a sinking line give you a more direct contact with the fly, especially if the leader length is kept between 2ft and 4ft. When using floating or a sink-tip line leader length should be dictated by the depth of the water you are fishing, in any case you should not exceed 9ft for the total length of your leader as this will become difficult to control. The ideal length is around 6ft.
 - **Knots:** When attaching a fly to your leader, always use a loop knot. This style of knot allows the fly to move with the current and it is not constrained by the knot.

- **Flies:** Streamers are available in all lengths, weights and hook sizes. But there is some method to the madness of patterns. Here's a quick look at the different types of streamers available. **Remember:** You need to get the fly to the trout, look at the water in front of you, is this best accomplished using a weighted fly with a floating line or an unweighted fly with a sinking line – or a mixture of the two? Here's a quick look at the different types of streamers available:
 - **Swimming Streamers:** This type of streamer is generally long and thin, this style gives a very natural movement when fished against any current.
 - **Jigging Streamers:** Where the weight of the fly is all in the head of the fly (think any sculpin pattern), when fished these rise and fall in the water column.
 - **Articulated Streamers:** As their name suggests, articulated streamers are generally tied in two separate pieces and can bend and twist in the current.
 - **Floating Streamers:** Not used so much in the UK, but this is the famous 'mouse' pattern which is favoured in New Zealand and parts of the USA.
- **Hook Position:** One important consideration when choosing your streamer is the position of the hook in the tying of the pattern, if the tail of the streamer overhangs the bend of the hook by too much you will often get the trout nipping the tail and not getting any hook-ups. If this is the case, shorten the tail so it protrudes no **more than 2" from the bend of the hook.**

So, you have all the gear, and your streamer rig setup, what now?

The basic streamer presentation is to cast the fly perpendicular to where you are fishing and then strip it back toward you in short, jerky movements. This basic method works pretty well, and is intended to imitate a small fish that has emerged from cover and is trying to escape. The popularity of streamer fishing is in the various different retrieves employed to impart action to the fly.

Try altering your style of retrieve:

- Try it slow and steady; or
- A couple of strips followed by a long pause (the pause is important, especially in colder water)
- Fish it like you would a spider pattern (down and across)

Where you cast is important, if you cast the streamer upstream it will fish deeper than if you cast either across or down. Remember to impart action to the streamer by also using the tip of your rod, try a long pull then a gently sideways movement with your rod, this mimics a distressed fish's movements.

Fishing a streamer can also allow you access to fishing when conventional fishing is almost impossible, think of fishing a high, coloured river – normally you would turn around and go home, but try running a streamer out of the main current and in any of the slower moving water. When water is coloured, fish use their lateral line to detect food and so long as you can impart some movement into the fly then there's a good chance it will be intercepted by a bigger fish on the hunt for food. In these water conditions it is also worthwhile choosing a fly which will make quite a disturbance in the water, any with a deer-hair head (muddler type) or lots of hackle (woolly bugger) are ideal.

I hope the above has given you a little insight into fishing with streamers and that you will give it a go this year.